

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on December 21, 2005, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered.

Prior to this paper, claims 1-68 were pending. By this paper, in order to advance prosecution, and without prejudice or disclaimer, Applicants (i) cancel claims 1-6, 12-15, and 27, and (ii) incorporate the recitations of formerly pending claim 12 into indicated allowable claims 16 and 17 (making these claims independent) and incorporate the recitations of formerly pending indicated allowable claim 27 into claim 26 (effectively placing allowable claim 27) into independent form. Applicants do not add any claims. Therefore, claims 7-11, 16-26, and 28-68 are now pending.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance for at least the reasons that follow.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank Examiner Pope for allowing claims 7-11, 19-25 and 32-68, and for the indication that claims 16-18 and 27 would be allowable if placed into independent form (which applicants have done by this paper, the recitations of dependent claim 27 being incorporated into independent claim 26).

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102/103

Claims 1, 12-13, 26 and 28-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Kobayashi (U.S. Patent No. 6,014,595), with claims 2-6 and 14-15 being rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kobayashi in view of Rogers (U.S. Patent No. 6,937,165).

In response, in order to advance prosecution, and without prejudice or disclaimer, Applicants cancel claims 1-6, 12-15. Applicants further incorporate the recitations of allowable claim 27 into claim 26, and cancel claim 27. Claims 28-31 now depend from an allowable claim – claim 26 (former claim 27). Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 1-6, 12-15, 26 and 28-31 is now moot, as claims 1-6 and 12-15 are no longer pending, and claim 26 now recites the claims of former claim 27 (indicated as being allowable), and claims 28-31 thus depend from an allowable claim.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.


The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Examiner Pope is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

Date Feb 24, 2006

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